

# YELLOW MARIPOSA LILY

*Calochortus luteus* Dougl. ex  
Lindl.

plant symbol = CALU9

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



Alfred Brousseau  
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## Alternate Names

Mariposa, sego lily, yellow calochortus

## Uses

*Ethnobotanic:* The bulbs were gathered for food with a digging stick by the southern Paiute and the Sierra Miwok. The Miwok dug the bulbs when buds appeared on the plants in April or later in flowering. The bulbs were roasted for about 20 minutes in ashes of a fire that had died down. When retrieved they were soft, like boiled potatoes. The bulbs also were baked in an earth oven.

## Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values.

## Description

*General:* Lily Family (Liliaceae). Populations of this species are found in heavy soils in grassland, woodland, and mixed-evergreen forest below 700 m. The leaves are basal, 10-20 cm long, and linear. The

showy flowers have 1-7 per stem. The yellow petals are bell-shaped and often have a central red-brown blotch inside, sparsely slender-hairy near the base and the crescent-shaped nectary is not depressed. The fruit is an angled capsule, 3-6 cm long.

## Distribution

For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site. The plant is found in the Sierra Nevada foothills, Sacramento Valley, central-western California, northwestern California, northern Channel Islands.

## Establishment

Collect or buy seed from local sources. Place the seeds in a paper bag until you are ready to plant them. Plant them in a 5 inch or deeper pot in a soil that has excellent drainage. Scatter the seeds at least one-quarter inch apart. Sprinkle a light layer of soil on top and then place quarter-inch gravel on top of the soil. The seed should be planted in the fall and requires no stratification. Let the pots sit outside during the winter in partial shade. Water the pots, keeping them slightly damp. Germination is generally about February. Fertilize the plants in a weak solution about once a month during active growth until April. When the tips of the leaves turn yellow, stop watering and fertilizing (about the end of April). The bulbs are dormant by flowering time. In the fall start watering again. Give the plants more room in the fall of the second or third year by transplanting them and spacing them 1-2 inches apart. Plant the plants outside in the ground in the third or fourth year. Plant them in full sun in summer or fall. Start watering them in September. After they have bloomed for the first time, they should be established.

## Management

Weed around the plants regularly and protect them from insects, birds, mammals, and other animals.

## Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

CALU9 is somewhat available through native plant nurseries within its range. Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials.

## References

Barrett, S.A. & E.W. Gifford. 1933. *Miwok material culture*. Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee 2(4):117-376.

Fiedler, P. & B. Ness 1993. *Calochortus*. pp. 1183-1189 IN: The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California. J.C. Hickman (ed.). University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

USDA, NRCS 1999. *The PLANTS database*. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. <<http://plants.usda.gov>>. Version: 990405.

## Prepared By & Species Coordinators

*M. Kat Anderson*

USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center  
c/o Environmental Horticulture Department,  
University of California, Davis, California

*Wayne Roderick*

Former Director of the East Bay Regional Parks  
Botanic Garden, Berkeley, California

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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